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REVIEWS AND BOOK NOTICES.

T. Lucretius Carus. Of the Nature of Things, a metrical translation, by WILLIAM ELLERY LEONARD. London, Paris and Toronto: J. M. Dent & Sons, Limited; New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. [1916]. Pp. XV+301. Frontispiece. 4s. 6d.

So far as I can now recall, this is the first translation, or at all events the first important translation of the entire poem of Lucretius into English verse which has appeared since Creech's time, two centuries ago. For this reason alone the new version might well deserve a more extensive treatment than can be given it in this brief notice.

The translation is preceded by a Preface (VII-XII) and by a sonnet 'To the Master'. A large proportion of the Preface is taken up with some more or less obvious remarks on the art of translation in general. To my own thinking the space devoted to this lucubration could have been occupied to much greater advantage by something else. For example, as a translator of Lucretius, Professor Leonard might have devoted at least a paragraph to his own predecessors; and as a professor of English, he is doubtless able to speak with authority regarding the influence of this great poet on our literature. To be sure there is one brief reference to Munro, but I confess feeling a certain vague resentment at the somewhat cryptic expression, 'meticulous impeccability', which is bestowed upon that great translation.

In the two Italian phrases quoted from Carlo Giussani, 'abbondanza Lucretiana' (p. IX) should be 'abbondanza Lucreziana' and 'evidentimente' (p. 117 n.) should be 'evidentemente'. 'Carlo Giussani' appears in the first line of the Preface and this is the form in which the name of the great Lucretian scholar, Carlo Giussani, occurs throughout the entire book. 'Mens praecipit oculos', as Quintilian says, and as we ourselves learn to our sorrow when we undertake to correct our own proof.

The metrical form used by Professor Leonard is blank verse, and this, it seems to me, is a wise choice. Blank verse is adjustable to many moods, and one needs such a form if one is to translate a poet like Lucretius, who in descriptive bits can rise to the empyrean and yet in dogmatic passages can vindicate his

right to be called one of the clearest and most logical thinkers in the entire history of philosophical speculation.

In discussing Professor Leonard's version it may be interesting to note that in his opinion 'The translator of Lucretius (p. XI) is struck with the curious mixture of archaic and colloquial expressions, with the frequent rhymes, and with that insistent alliteration which the delicate art of the next generation was to subdue to a quiet allusiveness'. Students of Ennius and of the earlier literature will not be so deeply impressed by this statement. Moreover it is a well-known fact that the differences in style and form between Lucretius the poet and Lucretius the philosopher are too marked to be accidental. Professor Leonard's *aperçu*, however, has an interest of its own. It suggests that some of the more striking peculiarities of his style as a translator are deliberate attempts to reproduce what he conceives to be the tone of his original. Certainly whatever else it may be, his own style is a 'curious mixture of archaic and colloquial expressions'. Here we have (p. 220) 'the bodies of the strong-y-winged', there (p. 239) 'What erst was of a price, becomes at last a discard of no honour'; here (p. 93) 'Those scriven leaves of thine', there (p. 32) 'Bones to be sprung from littlest bones minute'. Sometimes the colloquialism is due to literal translation, as in V, 1-2,

Quis potis est dignum pollenti pectore carmen
condere pro rerum maiestate hisque repertis?

which he renders,

O who can build with puissant breast a song
Worthy the majesty of these great finds?

Of course, 'finds' is an absolutely literal translation of 'reper-tis'. But as not infrequently occurs in such oddly literal examples, 'finds' does not belong to the stylistic sphere of 'reper-tis' at all; like 'discard' in the phrase just quoted, it does not, in my own opinion, belong in the same sphere with Lucretius at any time. On the contrary it reminds one distantly of

crudum manduces Priamum Priamique pisinnos

which was Labeo's rendition of Homer's (Iliad, 4, 35),

ὤμῶν βεβρώτους Πρίαμον Πριάμοιο τε παῖδας.

'Inland rivers, far and wide away' (p. 10) is only one of many lines that might be quoted illustrating the marked tendency of colloquial speech to group prepositions. I am inevitably reminded of a rustic tale once told me in which I was informed among other things that 'George went down around in back of the barn every time he took a smoke'. Indeed, the occurrence of such words as 'ilk', 'thunder-heads', etc., suggest local dialects as well as colloquial usage to the ordinary reader.

Professor Leonard has a tendency to make favourites of words like 'sturdy', and 'skiey', to affect such compendia as 'tmust', and such rarities as 'wrinklest'. On the whole his vocabulary is odd rather than striking, and unusual rather than poetical. He is very fond of the word 'percase', he tells of 'chariots . . . areek With hurly slaughter' (p. 115), his 'ploughman . . . crackles, prating, how the ancient race' (p. 89), 'Space . . . extends Unmetered forth in all directions round' (p. 48), 'caeli regionibus I, 64 appears as 'region skies' (p. 5), 'solis praeclara luce' II, 1032 as 'the splendour-sun' (p. 83), 'altas turris ruere' V, 307 as 'the lofty towers ruin down' (p. 199). If it were not for the original 'repetunt oculis (which he reads with Creech instead of ollis) gestum pede convenienti' IV, 791, it would be difficult for the average man to know what in the world was meant by such a phrase as 'With speedy motion and with eyeing heads' (p. 165). What is an eyeing head? Indeed, it would sometimes seem, to paraphrase freely from Professor Leonard's own sonnet, 'To the Master', that his sturdy voice of still unconquered youth hath in an unknown tongue reported Lucretius. Certainly there is very little here of the strange solitary majesty of Lucretius, and only a distant echo now and then of those wonderful phrases which stirred the imagination of men like Vergil, Horace, and Ovid, which suggested to Spenser some of his finest lines and which occasionally shine in the great Dryden when he is at his best. Nevertheless, I gladly agree with Professor Leonard's critic in the *Spectator* that 'he has faced a very difficult task with much real success'.

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The Indebtedness of Chaucer's Works to the Italian Works of Boccaccio, by HUBERTIS M. CUMMINGS. University of Cincinnati Studies X; Cincinnati, 1916.

The subject of Mr. Cummings's dissertation, which is published in the latest of the University of Cincinnati Studies, is one to arouse the very greatest interest and expectation. For next to the matter of French influence, the problem of Italian sources is perhaps the most important in the Chaucerian field. But considering the full nature of the questions involved, and realizing that we have a right to expect the most delicate and acute criticism if anyone takes upon himself the burden of such an investigation, one cannot feel that Mr. Cummings has satisfied our hopes in this volume.